

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

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C O N F I D E N T I A L ALGIERS 0988

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, AG
SUBJECT: ALGERIAN MINISTERIAL REORGANIZATION TO BEGIN SOON

1. ON APRIL 15, PRESIDENCY ANNOUNCED THAT "REORGANIZATION OF STRUCTURES OF GOVERNMENT" WOULD BEGIN "THIS WEEK." NO FURTHER DETAILS GIVEN, AND NO CHANGES HAVE BEEN ANNOUNCED AS YET.

2. PAUCITY OF HARD INFORMATION HAS, AS USUAL, DONE NOTHING TO DAMPEN SPECULATION ON WHAT SORT OF GOVERNMENT WILL EMERGE. WE SET FORTH BELOW MAJOR ISSUES WHICH REGIME SEEMS TO BE ADDRESSING AS WELL AS POSITIONS AND NAMES WHICH CROP UP MOST FREQUENCY IN OUR DISCUSSIONS OF IMPENDING SHAKEUP.

3. THE ECONOMY AND ABDESSELAM: ALTHOUGH REPORTS PERSIST THAT MINISTER OF INDUSTRY AND ENERGY ABDESSELAM WILL BECOME ECONOMIC CZAR WITH ALL ECONOMIC MINISTRIES UNDER HIS CONTROL, OPINION AT MOMENT RUNS MORE TO SOME DIMINUTION IN HIS POWER. MOST SOURCES WITH WHOM WE HAVE TALKED RECENTLY BELIEVE MINISTRY OF INDUSTRY AND ENERGY WILL BE DIVIDED, AND THAT ABDESSALAM'S RIVAL AND CRITIC, PRESIDENTIAL COUNSELOR DRISS DJAZAIRI, MAY BE GIVEN AN ECONOMIC PORTFOLIO.
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4. ONLY HARD INFORMATION AVAILABLE TO US ON KEY QUESTION OF ABDESSELAM'S FUTURE IS THAT MINISTER WAS BACK IN ALGIERS AS OF SEVERAL DAYS AGO, APPARENTLY IN POOR HEALTH. DIPLOMATIC COLLEAGUE SAW ABDESSELAM ARRIVING AT ALGIERS AIRPORT FROM EUROPE AND SAID THAT MINISTER LOOKED TERRIBLE.

5. NATIONAL ASSEMBLY DEPUTIES AS MINISTERS: QUESTION OF WHETHER MINISTERS ELECTED TO NATIONAL ASSEMBLY WILL BE ALLOWED TO KEEP PORTFOLIOS REMAINS UNANSWERED. HOW THIS ISSUE RESOLVED WILL AFFECT MINISTERIAL ECONOMIC SETUP SINCE TWO KEY FIGURES, FINANCE MINISTER TEMAN AND COMMERCE MINISTER YAKER, ARE DEPUTIES. WE NOTE IN PASSING THAT TEMAN, WHO WAS SUPPOSED TO BE TAKING REST CURE BY JOINING ASSEMBLY, IS CHAIRMAN OF THAT BODY'S FINANCE COMMITTEE, A POST FROM WHICH HE SHOULD HAVE SOME INFLUENCE ON ECONOMIC SITUATION.

6. VICE PRESIDENT AND/OR PRIME MINISTER: WITH ABDESSELAM'S START SEEMINGLY ON WANE, FONMIN BOUTEFLIKA AND INTERIOR MIN ABDELGHANI ARE RUMOR MILL'S LEADING CANDIDATES FOR VICE PRESIDENT AND/OR PRIME MINISTER. A SECOND VIEW, MORE PLAUSIBLE GIVEN REGIME'S CAUTION IN DELEGATING POWER, IS THAT BOUMEDIENE WILL NOT NAME VICE PRESIDENT OR PRIME MINISTER UNTIL AFTER FLN CONGRESS IN 1978.

7. POSITIONS AND PERSONALITIES: WITH PRESUMABLY ONLY A FEW DAYS TO GO UNTIL REORGANIZATION BECOMES PUBLIC, SPECULATION IS BEGINNING TO FOCUS INCREASINGLY ON SEVERAL POSITIONS TO BE CHANGED AND CANDIDATES FOR THESE POSTS. ONE OF THESE IS MINISTRY OF INFORMATION AND CULTURE IN WHICH, ACCORDING TO KNOWLEDGEABLE ARAB AMBASSADOR, MANTALE OF LEADERSHIP HAS ALREADY PASSED FOR DR. TALEB IBRAHIMI TO GOA AMBASSADOR IN MOSCOW REDHA MALEK, MINISTERS OF HIGHER AND SECONDARY EDUCATION ALSO CONFIDENTIAL

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SAID TO BE IN LINE FOR CHANGE WITH AMBASSADORS RAHAL (UN) AND LACHERAF (MEXICO) NAMED AS LIKELY SUCCESSORS. ANOTHER FIGURE WAITING IN WINGS FOR MINISTERIAL NOMINATION IS AMBASSADOR TO EGYPT DJAMAL HOUHOU.

8. THERE IS ALSO TALK THAT STATUS OF SOME COUNCIL OF REVOLUTION MEMBERS WILL BE CHANGED. GENDARMERIE COMMANDER BENCHERIF RUMORED AS POSSIBLE CANDIDATE FOR CABINET, PERHAPS AS HEAD OF A NEW ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS MINISTRY, AND NATIONAL POLICE DIRECTOR GENERAL, COLONEL AHMED DRAIA, SOMETIMES MENTIONED AS POSSIBLE TRANSPORT MINISTER. ONE GOA OFFICIAL EVEN WENT SO FAR AS TO PREDICT THAT BENCHERIF WOULD NOT RETAIN HIS POSITION AS GENDARMERIE COMMANDER. LATEST REPORT IS THAT COUNCIL OF REVOLUTION/CABINET MEMBERS FONMIN BOUTEFLIKA, MINIT ABDELGHANI, AND MINAGRIC TAYEBI LARBI WILL REMAIN IN PLACE.

9. COMMENT: AT THIS JUNCTURE, QUESTIONS OF REAL INTEREST

SEEM TO US TO BE STATUS OF ABDESSELAM AND THAT OF
COUNCIL OF REVOLUTION MEMBERS. OUR HUNCH IS THAT NEITHER
WILL BE SIGNIFICANTLY REDUCED UNLESS, OF COURSE,
ABDESSELAM IS REALLY TOO ILL TO CONTINUE.LYNE

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